

WHAT CALLS FOR ATTENTION?

Excerpt from
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Heidegger calls for us to *be* a certain way. He calls for authenticity in *Being and Time* (SZ), and for efforts such as meditative thinking, letting be, and waiting in the later work. I am arguing that the required effort involves *attention* most essentially. The text where this is most evident is the 1951-52 *What is Called Thinking?* (WCT), where Heidegger translates *noein* as *in-die-Acht-nehmen* (to take heed of) and interprets Parmenides as proclaiming that attention and the presencing of Being are the Same; in fact, that the presencing of Being calls for attention. I also argue that the effort of attention enables more profound presencing, including that of our own. When Being is understood as presencing, this implies that attention is intimately related to the very Being of beings.

In this text Heidegger associates attention with direct (*unmittelbar*) apprehension, which would appear to be a reversal of SZ where he argues against the intuition of present-at-hand objects in Husserl. Indeed, for Husserl attention and intuition are intimately related, but I argue that for (the later) Heidegger the meaning of attention/intuition has changed with the associated ontology, for now it is how we *stay with* entities as they come into presence, how we participate in their very manifestation. Attention is

the fundamental mode of access to particulars, where the very meaning of particulars has changed—this is not access to fixed entities that are already present, but rather to entities with depths that can be plunged by way of proper (*eigentlich*) efforts of attentiveness.

We will also see that there is a sense in which the manifestation of beings is not complete, not fulfilled, without the participation of human beings by way of the effort of attention.

The question that Heidegger poses is, do we heed, do we *stay with* (remain present to) the very event of presencing itself, or are we immersed (*aufgehen*) in the objects that arise in the process, thereby being absent to their very manifestation. This determines the extent to which we participate in, and belong to, Being. For by attending to the presencing of Being we take part in its work (*energeia*). For instance, discussing fragment B16 of Heraclitus, Heidegger says “we must heed [*achten*] something else: *physis* and *kruptesthai*, rising (self-revealing) and concealing...” (EGT 113). We are called on to let entities stand forth in the clearing, to allow them to be made manifest as they emerge from the primal unfolding of Being. For this purpose attention must be paid to the primal presencing itself and not be taken by the entities that arise; this is how we participate in the work of Being. It requires an extraordinary effort of attention, because, as Heidegger puts it, “the presencing of the near is too close for our customary mode of representational thought” (EGT 121).

4.1. On the Nature of Attention

WCT consists of twenty one lectures that were given during the winter and summer semesters of 1951 and 1952. In the last six lectures Heidegger discusses fragments of Parmenides which involve *noein*, which is typically translated as thinking. The focus of these lectures is the relation between *noein* and *legein*, which Heidegger translates as attending and gathering. We see this gathering in the notion of concentration that is associated with the focusing of attention, as the staying with an activity results in the orientation of our factual being to the accomplishment of a task. As Heidegger puts it,

Man learns when he brings everything he does into correspondence [*Entsprechung*] with whatever essentials are addressed to him at any given moment. We learn to think by attending [*achten*] to what there is to think about. (*WCT*, 4, trans. mod.)

The attending here means that we are fully disposed to the demands of the moment. The effort of attention can thus be characterized as a staying with that enables a gathering. We stand in readiness to deploy the associated resources when we are attentive, and we thus *correspond* (*Entsprechung*) to the demands of the moment. This is one sense in which our manifestation is more profound when we are gathered in this manner.

WCT is an important text because Heidegger argues here that thinking and Being are the Same, that they belong together. When thinking is understood as taking heed (in conjunction with gathering) the implication is that attention and Being are the Same, which is my claim. Heidegger asks “What is called thinking?” in several ways, the most fundamental of which is “What calls for thinking?” He concludes that we are called on to

attend the presencing of emerging entities, and that the event of attending belongs essentially to that presencing. This will imply that what is called for is a *staying with* the very movement of attention itself in the course of worldly engagement.

Heidegger translates *noein* as *in-die-Acht-nehmen* in *WCT*, which Wieck and Gray translate as “taking to heart.” It is interesting that in the companion piece to this text, “Moira,” which was developed from an undelivered portion of the lecture series, *in-die-Acht-nehmen* is translated as “taking heed of” by Krell and Capuzzi, which would seem to be more appropriate. But Wieck and Gray’s interpretation is understandable given how attention appears in the text. For while themes such as taking to heart (*Beherzigen*; 175), memory (*Gedächtnis*), devotion (*Andacht*), and disposition (*Gemüt*) are explicit, attention is not. There is virtually no thematic discussion of attention in the preceding text, but instead terms for attention (and paying heed) are *employed* throughout the text in Heidegger’s demonstration of what thinking is; that is, while he goes about thinking about the nature of thinking itself.

Heidegger shows what attention is in the act of thinking itself, inviting us to participate in the work throughout the text. By proceeding in this manner he is abiding by the assertion that one learns to think by doing it, not by having it explained (*WCT* 3). The translators seem not to have recognized the importance of attention, although they did insert some connotations at various points in the text. Does this mean that attention is an empty, vapid word, like Being? Is its meaning transparent, self-evident, such that it is

taken for granted by the philosophical community at large? If so, this is additional support for the claim that attention is intimately related to Being.

Ordinarily we do not attend to the event of presencing itself; Heidegger makes it clear that we typically attend to the objects that appear instead of the event of their appearance. He calls this falling (*Verfallen*) in the earlier work, which means to be *taken by* the objects that appear instead of *staying with* the event of presencing itself. Thus instead of attending to the path (*Weg*), attention is absorbed or immersed in the appearances that arise along the way. Effort is required to resist the ever-present temptation to fall, and to keep along the path of presencing. But why is such an effort called for? Heidegger tells us that Being calls for it, but in the present context it means that if attention is human presencing, the only way to know what it is, is to attend to that presencing; that is, to stay with the very movement itself in the course of everyday engagement with the things of this world. Thus the way to the question “What is attention?” (and thus to the Being question) is the effort of attention itself, in the form of sustained and acute attentiveness to the event of presencing itself. This is why Heidegger is always telling us to attend to this or that, why he is directing us to the effort of attending/presencing itself.

I am referring to this effort as *ontological effort*, as another name for the gathering or collecting of human Being. The effort is ontological because it involves our whole being. The gathering comes about by staying with the movement of attention, which results in a *stilling* of its motion. It is a slowing down (tarrying), a grounding, and is thus

related to the notions of rest and grounding that appear in Heidegger, for when one stays with the movement of attention, the movement of one's very presence, it is a grounding in which one is rooted. One is there and one knows it, impervious to any influences that may take one away (falling). Such a holding/grounding enables one to see what ordinarily takes one away, and become aware of the event of presencing itself. This is a grounding that is abyssal, a paradoxical open ground in contrast to the closed grounds of ordinary metaphysics.

There are a number of terms in Heidegger that can be related to this sort of effort: *halten* (hold), *wahren* (preserve), *währen* (endure), *stehen* (stand), *Stätigkeit* (steadiness), and *Standfestigkeit* (steadfastness). For instance, the care word *wahren* means preserving, watching over, and guarding, and Heidegger says that *halten* originally means to tend, keep, take care (*hüten*, *PLT* 54). He also points to the ontological meaning of standing: "We see ... that we are standing [*innestehen*] in the midst of this contradiction. This standing [*Stand*] of ours is more actual than just about anything else that we call actual—more actual than dogs and cats, automobiles and newspapers" (*IM* 82). Such standing and holding enable the constancy of presence which in turn is the basis for the endurance of Being. *Stehen* and *halten* will be particularly important as we go forward in the later Heidegger.

4.2. Attention in *What is Called Thinking?*

In this section I show how attention appears in the lectures which precede the discussion of Parmenides' fragments, after which I review Heidegger's study of the fragments themselves. It is striking that in contrast to the virtual absence of attention terms that are employed in meaningful contexts in *SZ*, there are so many appearances of the terms in contexts of importance in *WCT*. We have seen that in *SZ* Heidegger contests the notion of direct intuition which is unaccompanied by an associated "practical" understanding. We did see that in *SZ* everyday attention appears in the form of circumspective concern, as Dasein goes about its practical affairs. The primacy of the practical means that Dasein deals directly with things as they are tended to. In *WCT* attention (*Achtsamkeit*) is employed in exactly the same manner, that is, as a mode of "direct" apprehension, where direct means here that attention participates in the manifestation of entities. In fact, Heidegger starts the discussion of Parmenides by initially translating *noein* as perception (*Vernehmen*, also translated as apprehension), after which he comes to *In-die-Acht-nehmen* after perusing several other formations rooted in the verb *nehmen*. The lessons of *SZ* are taken to heart as attention is accompanied by an understanding and embedded in a context, in this case a context of words and things. The words say things, where saying is a showing that needs to be heard.

Heidegger begins *WCT* by saying we must be ready to learn thinking (3). What is the nature of this readiness? It requires an inclination to thinking, but

We truly incline only toward something that in turn inclines toward us, toward our essential being, by appealing to our essential being as the keeper who holds us in our essential being. What holds us in our essential nature holds [*hält*] us only so long, however, *as we for our part keep holding on to what holds us* [*als wir selber von uns her das Haltende behalten*]. (3, italics added, trans. mod.)

We are called on to think by the Being of beings. We belong to Being, but something is called for *from us*. It can hold us only so long, for we have a part to play. We must *hold on in our own way*, which is by staying with the things themselves, standing with them. Thus Heidegger's suggestion (I argue) is that we are called to be extraordinarily attentive in the course of the everyday. This is the holding, the ontological effort that is called for.

Heidegger asks how we are to learn how to think. We must be ready, gathered in our whole being, so that all resources are oriented to the task at hand, which gathering is enabled by the staying-with of attention. The central claim of *WCT*, discussed in Section 4.3, is that the essential nature of thinking lies in the conjunction of *noein* (attention) and *lesein* (gathering), as oriented to the Being of beings. The Being of beings calls for the effort; but whether the effort actually occurs, whether the call is heard, is indeterminate.

This is why Heidegger calls for attention, for listening to what calls for thinking:

Hence our need and necessity first of all to hear the appeal of what is most thought-provoking. But if we are to perceive what gives us food for thought, we must for our part get underway to learn thinking.... What we can do in our present case, or anyway can learn, is to listen closely [*genau hinzuhören*]. (25)

We must first learn to listen to the appeal of what calls for thinking in order to be able to get underway, which learning requires attention itself.

I wish to show that for Heidegger, sustained and acute attentiveness (steadfastness) enables a deeper, more profound manifestation of and relation with encountered beings. This can be seen in terms of the hermeneutical circle. Attention is guided by understanding to encounters which are further constitutive of the understanding, which in turn is the basis for the further guidance of attention. It is essential to recognize, however, that although understanding *guides* attention, it is not determinative of what it encounters. It is the possibility of acute and sustained attention that enables transcendence. We are called on to be ever vigilant so as to stay open to a more profound understanding. That vigilance offers the possibility of going deeper:

To keep clear of prejudice we must be ready and willing to listen. Such readiness [*Bereitwilligkeit*] allows us to surmount the boundaries in which all customary views are confined, and to reach a more open territory. (12-13)

The effort is not staring or “mental” concentration, but is rather a waiting, a staying with, tarrying, or dwelling, as McNeill has argued. That is, the present understanding which is ultimately constituted by the understanding of Being may be transcended by a “leap” into “more open territory” by way of extraordinary attentiveness. In fact, this is what Heidegger calls for, preparation for such a leap by way of a lifetime of practice. This is the way to go from the surface of things to a deeper understanding and experience of what is.

We are called on to stay open in order for the depth dimension to be made more manifest. For Heidegger this is the philosophical quest, to seek a deeper understanding of

Being, which is the ultimate assumption in any argumentation. He puts it well when he considers what it is to stand before a tree in bloom in a meadow:

The tree and we meet one another.... This face to face meeting is not, then, one of those “ideas” buzzing about in our heads.... We *are* now, men who have leapt, out of the familiar realm of science and even ... out of the realm of philosophy. Where have we leapt?... On that soil upon which we live and die, if we are honest with ourselves. We must first leap onto the soil on which we really [*eigentlich*] stand. (41)

We leap onto the soil on which we really *stand*, where we really *are*, in the nearness of what presents itself to us at all times. The standing enables an opening which opens the clearing of Being. Heidegger is saying here that the scientific world view is so powerful that it requires a leap to get to the essentials of experience. He asks how science decides which dimensions of the tree are considered to be real; is it the tree viewed at the cellular level, or as a mechanical system of sustenance, or is it the tree as we directly experience it? Indeed, how does science derive the authority to opine on such matters?

We are today rather inclined to favor a supposedly superior physical and physiological knowledge, and to drop the blooming tree.... The thing that matters first and foremost ... is not to drop the tree in bloom, but for once to let it stand where it stands.... To this day thought has never let the tree stand where it stands. (*WCT* 44)

This means that staying with the experience of the tree enables it to come to full fruition, to be made manifest more profoundly. What could be the basis for such an assertion? It can only be the experience of standing before the tree itself in a stance of extraordinary and acute presence, and seeing what is thereby made manifest. Our standing enables the tree to stand there, as we participate in the event of its standing.

It is essential to understand that we are not attending to objects that are present-at-hand, but rather that entities are coming into presence by way of attention. The acuity of the attention determines the depth of the manifestation. This is why he says regarding the showing associated with saying,

Words are wellsprings that are found and dug up in the telling, wellsprings that must be found and dug up again and again, that easily cave in, but that at times also well up when least expected. If we do not go to the spring again and again, the buckets and kegs stay empty, or their content stays stale. (130)

This is the effort that must be repeated again and again to preserve the meaning of words that have been retrieved, which is the essence of care-taking for the later Heidegger. He is pointing here to another relation with language by way of extraordinary attentiveness. We see numerous examples of Heidegger discussing attention as enabling a more profound listening to what words say rather than approaching matters by way of universals and abstractions. For instance, “we give specific attention [*achten*] to what the word says” (128) , “When we hear directly [*unmittelbar hören*] what is spoken directly [*unmittelbar*], we do not at first hear the words as terms, still less the terms as mere sound” (129), and “Attention [*das Achten*] to what words tell us is supposedly the decisive step and directive on that way of thinking which is known by the name philosophy” (131). He also contests the notion of ideas “in our heads,” saying that “the word ‘idea’ comes from the Greek *eido*, which means to see, face, meet, be face to face”

(41), and goes into the discussion of attending directly to the tree, where we *are* together.

This is followed by a discussion of how a mother might deal with a wayward son.

It will be easier the more directly [*unmittelbarer*] she can get him to listen—not just condescend to listen, but listen in such a way that he can no longer stop wanting to do it. And why? Because his ears have been opened and he now can hear what is in accord with his nature. (48)

Later in the text another reference to direct attending appears in relation to dwelling (*Wohnen*, translated here as abiding) in what is essential:

What we encounter at first is never what is near, but always only what is common. It possesses the unearthly power to break us of the habit of abiding in what is essential, often so definitively that we never come to abide [*Wohnen*] anywhere. (129)

For Heidegger, the common meanings and prejudices which capture attention prevent thinking from going deeper. Attention depends on the understanding and its associated terms, so when all things are reduced to a common denominator (216) attention follows that path. Only the effort of acute and sustained attention enables us to break out of the circle and go deeper into the nature of the things themselves, to hear them speak:

Language likes to let our speech drift away into the more obvious meanings of words. It is as though man *had to make an effort* to live properly with language. It is as though such a dwelling is prone to succumb to the danger of commonness. (118-19, italics added)

This means that attention (synonymous with dwelling) is confined to the surface of things because it is captured by the superficial meanings which in turn reflect the shallowness of our own dwelling. This theme appears in several other contexts. For instance, Heidegger says that ideas as commonly formed provide only “the appearances of surfaces and

foreground facets” (82), that only a readiness to listen “allows us to surmount the boundaries in which all customary views are confined, and to reach a more open territory” (13), and that “the tendencies of the age always remain only in the foreground of what is” (55). Even the thought of Nietzsche himself “speaks only in the foreground, so long as we understand it exclusively in terms of the language of traditional thinking, instead of listening for what remains unspoken in it” (55). But we ordinarily do not wish to waste time tarrying (*aufhalten*) over the sense of individual words (127), and indeed it is very difficult for us to pay heed (*achten*) to what the words say (130). The only hope to be able to “reach what *is*” (66) lies in acute and sustained attention. It is listening to what is unspoken that enables us to go deeper than the common meanings.

A related theme in which attention is prominent is the notion of “being underway” to thinking. Heidegger says that we must start from where we are, where we currently have a notion of thinking as the formation of ideas (45). That is, we must start from where we are thrown in the midst of factual life, from our current understanding of thinking. But this is only how thinking has traditionally been understood, whereas if we were to stay with, or dwell attentively with the very event of thought we might be able to see more deeply. As Heidegger puts it,

The real nature of thought might show itself, however, at that very point where it once withdrew, if only we will pay heed [*achten auf*] to this withdrawal.... The real nature of thought might reveal itself to us if we remain underway. We are underway.... Underway, then—we must give particularly close attention [*achten*] to that stretch of way on which we are

putting our feet. We meant to be attentive [*acht zu haben*] to it from the first lecture on.... (45-46)

Nevertheless, if we are to remain underway we must first of all and constantly give attention [*beachten*] to the way. The movement, step by step, is what is essential here. (170)

This is how Heidegger shows what attention is, as the way of thinking. Paying heed to the withdrawal of the “real nature of thought” will be an important theme in what follows, particularly in Chapter 6.

4.3. Parmenides on Thought

Turning now to the fragments of Parmenides, Heidegger begins with fragment 6, which is typically translated: One should both say (*legein*) and think (*noein*) that Being is (168). Although *noein* is translated as thinking, Heidegger notes that both *legein* and *noein* have become aspects of how thinking is understood today, the former as proposition and the latter as apprehension (*Vernehmen*) by reason (210). But he argues that the more originary meaning of *legein* is to lay, to lay before (198). At this point Heidegger directs us to his essay “Logos” in *EGT* for more detail, to which we now turn.

4.3.1. Attention and Logos

In this essay Heidegger considers fragment B50 of Heraclitus, which is typically translated as “When you have listened not to me but to the Meaning, it is wise within the same Meaning to say: *One is All*” (*EGT* 59). For this purpose he discusses the relation between laying and a gathering that is more than a mere amassing, but is rather a

collecting, a bringing together (*EGT* 60-61). Furthermore, this gathering has a sheltering in view that is its *ordering principle*. He gives the example of the gathering of a vintage where there is an initial selection which in turn is based on a fore-gathering that determines the selection (62). Heidegger says that gathering and laying are intimately related, and what laying means is to *let* things lie together *before us*. This letting does not mean “omitting or letting go,” rather,

Whatever lies before us involves us and therefore concerns us.
Laying as letting-lie-together-before [*beisammen-vorliegen-Lassen*] is concerned with retaining whatever is laid down as lying before us. (62)

Thus we see the essential theme of concern for and preservation of that to which we attend. As we shall see, attention enables the attended entity to be made manifest more completely, in “full bloom” as it were, in the clearing [*Lichtung*] of presencing.

Heidegger is careful to distinguish between the gathering that first brings whatever lies before us (*Vorliegende*) and laying/*legen* itself (*Vorliegenlassen*), which lets (*lassen*) what *of itself* lies before us (the *Vorliegende*) into its protection. This enables the presencing (*Anwesen*) of that which lies before us into unconcealment (63). He goes on to relate such presencing to the essence of language:

Saying and talking occur essentially as the letting-lie-together-before of everything which, laid in unconcealment, comes to presence. The essence of saying and talking is under the governance of laying proper. (63)

Heidegger now turns to the question of the nature of hearing in a manner similar to the discussion of language in §34 of *SZ*. Hearing is not rooted in the physiology of the ears, but rather calls for a gathering of oneself:

Hearing is actually this gathering of oneself which composes itself on hearing the pronouncement and its claim. Hearing is primarily gathered hearkening [*Das Hören ist erstlich das gesammelte Horchen*]. What is heard comes to presence in hearkening. (65)

He goes on to discuss the scientific explanation for hearing, and then relates proper hearing to attention:

In contrast to this, perhaps only a little can be said concerning proper hearing, which nevertheless concerns everyone directly. Here it is not so much a matter for research, but rather of paying thoughtful attention [*achten*] to simple things. (65)

Thus attention is linked with proper hearing which is itself a gathering of oneself, and we again have the intimate relation between attention and gathering, or *noein* and *legein*.

While letting is the essence of *legein*, Heidegger distinguishes between *legein* in general and mortal *legein*, which is called *omologein*. “Proper hearing occurs essentially in *legein* as *omologein*” (66). The product of the primal gathering of Being is collected and brought forward by human effort (70). “Logos needs *omologein* if present beings are to appear and shine in presencing” (75). Thus we see the foregrounding that is associated with attention appear here in the context of human participation in the gathering of Being. There is a sense in which the presencing of beings is *not complete* unless there is proper

hearing. We will also see this theme in Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides, and indeed he says that Heraclitus and Parmenides say the Same (*IM* 103, 145).

We belong to Being by participating in the gathering and preserving of what comes into presence, which is the basis for world constitution. Our role is gathering, hearing, attending, which is a guarding, watching, and preserving of the order that is given, a letting be. In this way we are intimately related to the site of presencing, where entities come to the fore in their being. The extent to which we belong (*gehören*) depends on the extent to which we listen (*hören*) profoundly to the primal gathering, rather than being lost in the appearances themselves. We are called on to listen and thus be gathered in a manner that is similar to the primal gathering itself, except that we do not assemble anything ourselves; rather we are to let lie whatever is presented to us by way of the primal gathering of Logos.

As such, the proper hearing of mortals is in a certain way the Same as the Logos. At the same time, however, precisely as *omologeîn* [mortal gathering] it is not the Same at all.... [It] only lays or lets lie whatever is already ... gathered together and lying before us; this lying never springs from the *omologeîn* but rather rests in the Laying that gathers, i.e. in the Logos. (*EGT* 67)

This is indicative of the notion of correspondence (*Entsprechung*), where we belong to the Logos by being responsive to the Laying that gathers, as discussed in Section 6.3.1 below.

Turning back to *WCT*, Heidegger begins the inquiry into fragment 6 by thinking of *noein* in terms of *vernehmen* (perceive) and other variants with a root of *nehmen*, such

as *aufnehmen* (receive), but says that it should not be thought of as passive acceptance (*WCT* 203). Rather he points to another lecture course he gave years earlier, almost certainly *IM*, where he says that *noein* must include an active dimension, such as undertaking (*vor-nehmen*) something. But how is such an undertaking taken up?

We take heed of it. What is taken heed of, however, is left to be exactly as it is. This taking heed does not make over what it takes. Taking heed is: keeping at attention (203, trans. mod.).

In *noein* a perceiving presides, which is however not a mere acceptance in advance of something. *Noein* perceives beforehand by taking heed. Attention [*Acht*] is the watching [*Wacht*] that takes in the truth [*Wahr*], though this itself requires a safekeeping that is consummated by *legein* as gathering. (207, trans. mod.)

We translate *noein* with “taking heed of [*in die Acht nehmen*]”.
(207, trans. mod.)

Thus Heidegger sees *noein* as attention, but an attention that lets what lies before us, as it is presented to us, be present in our safekeeping. He also associates attention with “divination,” where authentic divination is “the mode in which essentials come to us and so come to attention [*in die Acht gibt*], in order that we may keep them therein” (207, trans. mod.).

Heidegger says that the reason *legein* is mentioned first in the fragment is because *legein* provides *noein* with something to attend to (as lying before us), and that once something is heeded it is again gathered and safeguarded. Heidegger then explains how each enters into the other. On the one hand, *legein*, the letting lie before us, “unfolds of its own accord” into the *noein* (208). This means that *noein* participates in the letting of *legein*, which is a letting lie before:

For instance, when we let the sea lie before us as it lies, we, in *legein*, are already engaged in holding in attention [*in der Acht zu halten*] what lies before us. We have already taken heed of [*in die Acht genommen*] what lies before us. *Legein* is tacitly disposed to *noein*. (209, trans. mod.)

It must be noted, however, that the letting is not limited to that which comes about due to mortal *noein*, for as we saw in the discussion of “Logos,” mortal *legein* is understood to be *omologein* relative to *legein* in general. This is key for Heidegger’s assertion of the primacy of *legein* relative to *noein*, as it provides a letting lie before us in advance of the taking heed.

On the other hand, we can also see how attention is a gathering itself:

When we take heed of what lies before us, we attend to its lying. In attending we collect ourselves in relation to what lies before us, and gather what we have taken heed of. Where to? Where else but to itself, so that it may be made manifest, as it of itself lies here before us. (209, trans. mod.)

Thus we see that attention itself is the force that gathers both us in our being, and what we have taken heed of. This relates back to Heidegger’s statement cited above (*WCT*, 4) that learning calls for a gathering of ourselves by way of attention to answer to the essentials that are addressed to us. He concludes that *legein* and *noein* are in a conjunction which achieves “what later ... is specifically called *aletheia*: to disclose and keep [*halten*] disclosed what is unconcealed” (209). But this conjunction does not rest in itself, rather it is oriented toward what calls for thinking, which is the duality of the Being of beings. The duality (*eon emmenai*) must first lie before us openly and be taken heed of, for this is what it calls for (223).

The attempt to hear what is expressed in the Greek words *eon emmenai*, is nothing less than the attempt to attend [*achten*] to That which calls on us to think. To the extent to which we make the effort to take heed of it [*Achtsamkeit*], we are asking ... What is That which calls on us to think, by so disposing the conjunction of *legein* and *noein* that it relates to It? (231, trans. mod.)

4.3.2. Attention, Thinking, and Being

After noting that Parmenides often speaks simply of *noein* instead of the conjunction of *legein* and *noein*, Heidegger says that *noein* is thinking only to the extent that it is focused on *eon*, which is the duality of Being and beings. He says this means that *noein* belongs to Being, which means in turn that attention belongs to Being. For support Heidegger turns to a discussion of fragment 5 of Parmenides, which is typically translated as “For it is the same thing to think and to be” (240). He also looks at the first line of fragment 8, which he translates as “For the same: taking-heed-of [*in-die-Acht-nehmen*] is also the presencing of what is present [*Anwesen des Anwesenden*]” (241, trans. mod.), which supports the claim that attention is human presencing. In asking what makes this the case, Heidegger says that the essential nature of *noein* consists in remaining focused on *eon*, the presencing of what is present, which in turn “keeps and guards *noein* within itself as what belongs to it” (241–42). But why is this the case? Why does presencing/Being need human attention? For this purpose we turn to the undelivered material that was later published as “Moira.”

In this essay Heidegger inquires into the relation between thinking and Being:

But *noein* calls to mind *noema*: what has been taken heed of [*in die Acht Genommene*] by an attentive apprehending [*achtenden Vernehmens*],.... Thinking comes to presence because of the still unspoken duality. The presencing of thinking is on the way to the duality of Being and beings. The duality presences in taking-heed-of. (*EGT* 88)

Here we see that attention itself comes into presence because it is called for by the Being of beings. It is on the way to the duality: “The taking-heed-of Being comes to presence on the way *to* the duality. In such a presencing thinking belongs to Being” (89). Thus it is in the very presencing of attention as called for by the Being of beings that attention belongs to Being, which is itself a presencing. As he puts it in *IM*, “the essence and the manner of Being-human can be determined only on the basis of the essence of Being” (148), and here attention is human Being/presencing. _

What is also of interest here is that the duality itself comes to presence in the taking-heed-of. That is, instead of our being immersed in the beings which come into presence, the very presencing of the beings itself comes into view when the call of the duality is heeded. This is something that the duality demands (89), but Heidegger says that we are far from experiencing the duality itself in an essential way, far from thinking. This is the puzzle with which he begins *WCT*: What demands thinking is the fact that we ourselves are still not thinking (*WCT* 4).

We have seen that *noein* needs an emergent letting-lie-before in order to have something to take heed of and preserve. Heidegger now says that the enabling letting-lie-before emerges in the unfolding of the duality (*EGT* 91). He notes here the dependence of

noein upon *legein*, and concludes that *noein* is essentially something said, where saying means to bring forward into view (89-90), as has been noted above. This bringing forward into view *completes* [*vollbringt*] *the gathering* that is called for by *eon*, which is why *eon* needs efforts of human attention that are directed in the appropriate manner (91). He concludes: “We have to learn to think the essence of language from the saying, and to think saying as letting-lie-before (*logos*) and as bringing-forward-into-view (*phasis*)” (91).

Thus we have a “gathering-calling saying” which Heidegger says brings forth a shining that endures, thereby enabling presencing to come about. He asks, “Could the unfolding of the twofold consist in this, that a shining which illuminates itself comes to pass (*EGT 93*)?,” which the Greeks experience as *aletheia*, or disclosure (*Entbergen*). Thus this lighting, this illumination is equated with the *aletheia* that “reigns” in the unfolding of the twofold of Being and beings, and determines what the thinker says and heeds because it “points the way into what is to-be-thought” (94).

That which unfolds, and in unfolding reveals the twofold, allows taking-heed-of to get under way toward the gathering perception of the presencing of what is present. Truth, the disclosure of the duality, lets thinking belong to Being. (95)

Disclosure, while it bestows the clearing [*Lichtung*] of presencing, at the same time needs a letting-lie-before [*vorliegen-Lassen*] and a taking-up-into-perception [*Vernehmen*] if what is present is to appear, and by this need binds [*einbehält*] thinking to its belonging-together [*Zugehörigkeit*] with the duality. (96)

We have therefore come full circle in positing the role of attention in unconcealment in *SZ*, for now we see explicitly that for Heidegger disclosure needs attention if what is present is to appear. We belong to Being because the manifestation of entities depends upon the effort (or lack thereof) of attention—the presencing of Being would not be the same without us. Being needs the presencing of attention, which need binds it to the Presencing of beings, which is in turn a clearing [*Lichtung*] that is the basis for the spotlight of attention.

4.4. Conclusion

Attention is a presencing and gathering which is intimately related to Being, which can be conceived as a unifying principle/force that enables the manifestation and relation of entities which are not pre-given prior to the manifestation. This is how Heidegger attempts to overcome the atomistic/mechanistic metaphysics which have predominated in philosophical thought, which posit present-at-hand structures underlying all that is. Heidegger's holism appears in the form of the Being that gathers all that tends to dispersion. This primordial ordering is not a static abstraction. Given the strife that is present, great force must be exerted to gather all that is into a unity, and we are called on to make such efforts ourselves. That is, Heidegger says that we are called on to attend the Being of beings in its very unfolding; our very gathering comes about because Being needs us for this work, to participate in the gathering of Being, which thus depends upon our efforts.

We are called on to stay with the very event of presencing, with the movement of attention itself. How does one attend the movement of attention itself? Where does it emanate from? This can be understood in terms of the hermeneutical circle, where attention is guided in its movement by the understanding. For Heidegger, understanding is ultimately understanding of Being, the ultimate context in which we dwell, the basis for the manifestation and ordering of all that is. There is a performative dimension to understanding, in that we show we understand something by doing it. So when we ask what is it to understand Being, this means to relate to and participate in it, which is always by way of attention. But that is what we always already do, because Being is the ultimate context in which things relate to one another. Thus we can conceive the hermeneutical circle as how attention relates to and participates in Being, in all that is. That is what determines the movement of attention.

Thus the call to stay with the movement of attention itself means that, by way of this reflexive move, we approach the source of the movement by stilling that very movement. One may ask, though, if we always already are related to Being, what exactly is it that we are called on to do? The idea is that some modes of understanding Being are better than others. Heidegger says that the understanding tends to fall, to devolve into everyday opinion, the sort of understanding out of which we must leap toward a higher mode of being. Thus we are called on to resist the falling and stay with the call that is implicit in our movement, at the core of our being. That call, as we shall see in the following chapters, is the call of Being that can be in various stages of withdrawal. The

more that we listen, the more that we stay with it in the very event of presencing itself, the more that it shows itself in its primordial self-concealing. As we saw in “Moira,” the very presencing of Being (“the duality itself”) shows itself by way of the taking-heed-of, and that is what Being calls for, what it calls for from us. This is why Heidegger calls for staying with the simple, with what is near, for we dwell in the presencing of Being itself. The deeper we go as we slow and still the movement, the more profound the relation with Being. Thus the movement of attention, which as the site of human freedom is essentially indeterminate, is what Being (and the divine) needs in order to be made manifest.

How is it that Being calls us? Why would we respond to the call? Attention is about respect (*achten*); we attend to what is higher, what deserves respect. What could it be that calls on us for the most acute and sustained effort of our whole being? It must be greater than us to deserve our full devotion. But this could only be the dimension of the divine; it is the divine by definition. As Heidegger puts it in his discussion of memory and devotion in *WCT*,

In its original telling sense, memory means as much as devotion [*An-dacht*]. This word possesses the special tone of the pious and piety, and designates the devotion of prayer, only because it denotes the all-comprehensive relation of concentration [*Sammlung*] upon the holy and the gracious. (*WCT* 145)

We have seen the relation between *achten* and *Sammlung*, and will see much more in Chapter 6 regarding the sacred dimensions of this relation. Perhaps this is why we see so

many references to clearing [*Lichtung*] and lighting, to the holy radiance that is associated with presencing in Heidegger's work. We can see it in essay "Aletheia" in *EGT*:

The gods are those who look into the clearing [*Lichtung*] of what is present, which concerns mortals after their own fashion, as they let what is present lie before them in its presence and as they continue to take heed of it [*in der Acht behalten*]. (EGT 119, trans. mod.)

Their relation to the clearing [*Lichtung*] is nothing other than the clearing [*Lichtung*] itself, in that this relation gathers men and gods into the clearing [*Lichtung*] and keeps them there.... Thus they can, in *their* way, accomplish [*vollbringen*] the lighting [*Lichten*] (bring it to the fullness of its essence) and thereby protect it. Gods and men are not only lighted [*belichtet*] by a light [*Licht*] – even if a supersensible one – so that they can never hide themselves from it in darkness; they are luminous [*gelichtet*] in their essence. They are alight [*er-lichtet*]; they are appropriated into the event of lighting, and therefore never concealed. (EGT 120, trans. mod.)

Thus we, who are luminous in our essence, are called upon to accomplish the lighting of presencing in the way that is possible for us.

As we show in what follows, consideration of the holy is the only way that Heidegger's discourse makes sense. Why would he say, for instance, that

How could anyone whose essence belongs to the clearing [*Lichtung*] ever withdraw from receiving and protecting the clearing [*Lichtung*]?... Everyday opinion ... does not see the quiet gleam (the gold) of the mystery that everlastingly shines [*scheint*] in the simplicity of the clearing [*Lichtung*] "Asses choose hay rather than gold." (EGT 122, trans. mod.)

While it is clear that the hay corresponds to everyday opinion, the common understanding, what is the gold that Heidegger is talking about? What is it that dispenses

the measures by which we are judged? The divine (the Godhead; *Gottheit*, *BW* 351) for Heidegger is not an entity, but rather withdraws in enabling the presencing of all entities, as we shall see below. We are called on to heed that withdrawal, to come closer to the source of all that is. This is what we lack, what we point to (*WCT* 9). We are gatherers and pointers.